

Human or Covenant
by flaminchica

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Summary: A girl is captured at 7 by the Covenant and raised on their ships. When she meets the Master Cheif and joins him in the race to uncover Halo's secrets first and get back at the Covenant for all they have done, her own secrets are revealed.

1. Prologue

_**Well, this is a remake of a fic I tried a couple of years ago. I said that once I read the books and had a better understanding and what not, I'd bring this back. Well, it's here, so read!

>
By the way, I don't own Halo. The peeps at Bungie do. And Microsoft, I guess. And I've twisted the story around a little bit so, it might not fit exactly with Halo: The Fall of Reach. If you have no clue what I'm talking about, don't worry, it won't really matter**_.

>
 "Aliens are attacking the city!" A girl with light blond hair fell off the couch and hit her head on the coffee table as someone opened the door to her grandparents house, yelled inside, then slammed the door again. Rubbing the sore spot on her head, she stood up and peeked outside.

> Metallic purple machines zoomed by, blasting what looked to be superheated plasma at the running civilians and buildings of Elysium City on Eridanus 2. The seven-year-old quickly slammed the door again as a tall, blue armored alien walked by, shooting at something with its plasma weapon. Running to the kitchen, she grabbed a stool and climbed onto the counter, opening one of the cabinets. She heard the door bust down and she quickly grabbed her grandfather's MA2B Assault rifle and M6D Pistol.
 Jumping off the counter she turned to find a place to hide. She shrieked when she saw the tall alien behind her. She pulled the trigger of assault rifle, spraying bullets at the alien.

> Much to her grandmother's dislike, her grandfather had taught her and her friend John how to use his guns. But right now, her grandfather was not there to coach her and the bullets were real, not stun bullets. The tall alien fell to the floor, dead, a pool of its blood gathering under its head. Stepping over the body, she quickly ran outside, an immediate mistake.
 Diving into the small shrubs

they called bushes, she aimed for a few smaller aliens near her. They squealed and barked like dogs, yet looked nothing like them. They stood about 5 feet tall and wore orange or red armor along with a mask. Aiming, she took a shot at one of the small creature's face, shooting a hole right through its mask. The creature squealed and grabbed its throat as it suffocated. The others in the creature's party turned to the bushes, but were all dead on the ground before they could investigate. Another alien, about eight inches taller than the others, looked around the dead bodies and into the bushes. It carried a large energy shield, a bit smaller than the creature itself. Carefully, the girl raised the pistol again, and pulled the trigger. The bullet pinged off the energy shield and the creature moved in, spraying an array of hot plasma the girl's way. The bushes caught fire and the girl quickly tried to find another place to hide. A bolt of plasma flashed over her shoulder and hit the building in front of her as she dodged around a corner. Crouching behind a waste receptacle, she watched as the creature passed by, scanning the area for her.

> Holding her breath, she did nothing as the alien began to rummage through the different boxes and crates in the space between the two homes. It moved to where she was hiding, about to knock the waste receptacle over when another blue armored alien walked into the alley. It said something in its odd language and the two aliens left. Once the coast seemed clear enough, the girl crept from her hiding place, glancing up and down the street.
Almost everything was in ruins. A few of the smaller, masked, aliens patrolled the street, their backs to her. Using her pistol, she shot them in the backs, making them fall over themselves. A couple survived the shots and turned. She tried to shoot again, but she was out of ammo. She tossed the pistol aside and picked up the assault rifle.

> The small creatures moved for her, shooting their plasma weapons. She dodged to the side and sprayed them in the rifle's bullets. They were all in a dead heap in the middle of the street a moment later.
Something suddenly grabbed the girl's shoulder. She glanced down at the semi-clawed hand the alien had her and then glanced up. She tried to wriggle free from the large alien's grasp. It held a large shield in its other hand that was thicker than the girl's palm. Spikes could be seen coming out of its back, making it seem larger than it was. The alien gripped tighter as it said something into a communicator on its shoulder in its unfamiliar language. A minute later, something answered back. Suddenly, the creature hit her on the head, and she crumpled into a heap at its feet, unconscious. Throwing her over its shoulder, the hunter made its way back to the alien drop-ship.

>
**well, that was the prologue, but chapter 1 will be up in no time. I hope. but, while you are waiting, review and have a cookie. flame, and have some dirt.**

2. On the Truth and Reconciliation

_**okay, here's the 1st chapter. ENJOY!

>
bility blah, blah. I don't own Halo.

>
Spacefan: Glad you like it! Thanks for pointing that out. I should have put in more about how independent she was and how the Hunter was impressed. Your thinking was correct. I hope you keep reading!

>
B.R. Wells: Well, yeah, it should have killed her, but... If she got killed then we wouldn't have a story, now would we? As the author, I do have the right to kill or not kill characters. Not that

I'm trying to make a 7 year old invincible. And I made her use an MA2B Assault rifle just because that's smaller than the MA5B. Thanks for pointing that stuff out in your review and I hope you keep reading!

>
writer51: Maybe. Maybe not. :P You'll see sooner or later.

Thanks for reviewing and I hope you keep reading!

>
Kulatu: Thank ye!

>
Shanel080: Thank you! I will!

>
NSA-Trooper: Did you die? I hope not. Sorry for any long wait.

>_

>Many Years Later
_

> Captain Jacob Keyes sat in a cell of the Covenant ship, the Truth and Reconciliation. A number of covenant guards stood near the door, two Elites in cloak armor and another in a stronger, gold armor. That one held a plasma sword. A few grunts stood in front of the main door to the brig, and a hunter stood in the very back. Next to it, sat a woman. Captain Keyes was most surprised to see this. The Covenant didn't seem to have a problem with her, besides the fact that she was under constant watch. A traitor? Keyes wasn't sure. She seemed vaguely familiar, as if he'd seen her before, only when she was younger. But he couldn't remember where or when. And more importantly, who she was.
 The hunter she sat near stepped off the platform and walked the length of the room, talking to one of the cloaked Elites. Glancing around the room, the woman stood and began to hit buttons on the hologram keypad to open the cells. The shields slowly began to disappear and the Marines all tried to run.

> The gold Elite ran over, shoving the woman aside and quickly reactivated the cell shields. It turned and stared down at the woman, who calmly stood and brushed herself off, not making eye contact with the Elite. The hunter strode over and said something to the elite and it walked off. The hunter then turned to the woman, who looked him in the eye and didn't say anything. It opened its mouth to tell her off when the door opened. All guns turned to the door. It was another hunter.
 "Yentam, you and the girl. Come on. There are human forces in the gravity lift room." it said in its odd language. The hunter, Yentam, gave the woman a warning look and walked out. The woman followed, glancing back at the gold armored Elite. They sneered at each other for a moment, then the woman disappeared down the hall.

> "Find yourself a cloak suit." Yentam ordered as they entered the armory. The woman took a suit of armor, a different size than the others, off the racks and fit herself inside. She pulled a helmet over her head tucking her hair inside. The helmet was designed to look like the head of an Elite, but she had never really worn the armor. She had really never fought anything but robots and probes and remote controlled Ghosts and Banshees. The Covenant had taught and trained her for her whole life this way. And even though they knew that she knew if she tried to go against them, she was dead, they still watched her constantly.
 The three exited the armory and made their way through the ship. The hunters stopped at a blast door, both of them eyeing her warily.

> "If we have to go in there, then it must be getting hot. We've sent multiple cloaked Elites already, and they haven't answered back. So you may be spotted. Find a place to hide and shoot what you can." Yentam instructed. The woman nodded, then disappeared as she activated the cloaking device. The other hunter pressed a few buttons on the blast door and unlocked the door. It opened immediately and the hunters rushed in.
 Assault rifle bullets sprayed their direction and the woman quickly dodged away. She pulled herself onto

a Covenant crate and scanned the room. She aimed her plasma rifle and shot. The hunter was barely damaged. She pulled the firing mechanism again repeatedly, the Marines and a man in a green armored suit also firing upon the hunter.

> From the side, Yentam tackled the crate, sending the woman sprawling. She immediately jumped to her feet and hurtled a plasma grenade at Yentam, which stuck to his shield. The hunter barely felt the heat as he charged at the woman, the plasma in his gun charging at a dangerous level.
 Pinned up against the wall, the woman kept shooting. Yentam released the charged plasma and she quickly ducked, flattening herself onto the floor. She glanced up at where she once stood, a small black crater burned into the wall. Scrambling to her feet, she ran and passed a Marine, grabbing his assault rifle from him. She hadn't held one of these in a long time. Tossing the nearly spent plasma rifle away, she turned and fired at the still charging Yentam.

> From the side, the green armored person shot the hunter in the head with a sniper rifle at nearly point blank range. The hunter roared, then crumpled and landed with a hard thud on the ground. Relief washed over the woman. She shoved the assault rifle back into the surprised Marine's hands.
 "Who's there?" he yelped. She let the cloaking device fall. The Marines all pointed their guns her way, but stopped as the one in the green armor, obviously the leader, held up a hand.

> "Drop your weapons." he ordered. She tossed three plasma grenades to the side and the plasma pistol on her belt to the ground at his feet. "Now, who are you and what are you doing?"
 "My name's Gina." she said, taking the helmet off. The Marines either all gasped or tried their best to conceal their surprise. "And I'm talking to you." she added. A couple of the Marines laughed, but stopped quickly as a darker man gave them looks.

> "How'd you get here, soldier?" he asked, making Gina jump at the tone of his voice.
 "I've been here so long, I can't remember." she replied. The man glanced over at the one in green.

> "Cortana, Master Chief, what do you think?" he asked.
 "Your guess is as good as mine, Sargent." the man replied. "Cortana?"

> "How long have you been here, exactly?" a woman's voice asked, not answering either soldier. Gina thought for a moment, counting on her fingers.
 "Thirty four years." she replied finally. Some of the Marines gaped, but shut their mouths again as the Sargent glared at them again.

> "Do you have any idea where the brig might be?" the woman asked. Gina nodded.
 "I was just in there. Are you looking for that Captain?" she asked. The Master Chief nodded.

> "Lead us there, please." he said. Gina nodded, and turned the way she had came with the hunters. She led the Marines and the Chief down to a blast door. Typing a few commands into the control panel, Gina unlocked and opened it.
 The hanger was mostly empty, except for a few Grunts and Jackals on the bottom and middle floor. The Marines barged in, recklessly destroying the surprised Covenant. They reminded Gina much of herself.

> The Master Chief picked a few Jackals off of the middle floor with his sniper rifle. He watched Gina from the corner of his eye. She grabbed a Needler off a dead Grunt and led the Marines on through the ship. She seemed familiar, as if he knew her a long time ago, before his Spartan training. He pushed his thoughts aside as one of the Marines yelled, "Fire in the hole!" and tossed a grenade at two Jackal guards patrolling the hall.
 "You know, we could easily find the brig without her help." Cortana pointed out to him.

> "I realize that." the Chief replied, stepping over the dead

Jackal's corpse.
 "Then what exactly might you be doing?" Cortana asked in annoyance.

> "I'm trying to figure out who the heck she is, what she's doing here, and who's side she's on." Master Chief replied, equally annoyed. The AI sighed in exasperation.
 "We're getting close to the Captain's signal." Cortana announced over the Chief's external speakers. Gina held up a hand a peeked around a corner. She turned back to the Master Chief and Marines, reloading the Needler.

> "It's around this corner. The door opens automatically to motion." she informed them. "There are two cloaked Elites and another one with a plasma sword. The grunts should be easy to take care of." She pulled her helmet over her head again, then disappeared. Master Chief watched her armor shimmer as she walked around the corner. His motion tracker showed a few red dots disappear as he heard the grunt's squeals and barks. Signaling with his hand, he and the Marines moved in.
 Cloak armor shimmered in front of him as Gina rammed into one of the Elites. It hit the floor with a thud, its cloak armor disappearing. The Marines opened fire on the new target, the rounds of their assault weapons blasting holes through the Elite's head. A plasma grenade flew out of nowhere and stuck to something un-seeable. The Marines all opened fire on the gold elite, but the bullets pinged off the energy shield. The Master Chief tossed a frag grenade and the enemy's shields flickered and died. The Marines continued the spray of fire from all directions and the elite crumpled.

> Gina's cloaking device fell again as she punched in commands on the holo-pad. The energy shields doors disappeared and a random captive Marine cheered.
 "Who is this? Friend of yours?" the Captain asked as MC helped him up.

> "We're not sure yet, sir." Cortana replied. "She has been a lot of help, actually."
 "I see." the Captain replied. "Right now we have more important matters to attend to. While the Covenant had us locked up in here, I overheard the guards talking about the ring world. They call it Halo."

> "Yes, that's right." Gina replied, tossing an inactive plasma grenade from one hand to the other. "They say whoever controls Halo, controls the fate of the universe."
 "Exactly." Keyes replied. "We have to beat the Covenant to Halo's control room. That is our first priority."

> "Then we shouldn't waste anymore time here." MC said, reloading his assault rifle. The rest of the group nodded, picking up random Covenant weapons as they ran out the door.
 "Might I suggest staying behind me?" Gina spat, ramming into a Jackal guard, stopping it from firing upon one of the Marines who had gone ahead. The Marine blinked and didn't reply. "I'll take that as an okay."

>
 **Well, abrupt ending (sorta). and it's a little late. sorry. I thought I would have a whole lot more up because I have nothing to do for the next few weeks, but being bored sorta gave me a tiny bit of writer's block. but it's gone now. I smashed it with a hammer! tee hee. see ya next time! COOKIES FOR ALL REVIEWERS!!!! (NOTE: cookies are virtual and have no taste.)**

3. Alpha Base

**WOOHOO! reviews! thank ye!**

_**B. R. Wells: why thank you! I agree, there do need to be more non-script fics for Halo. have some digital peanut butter cookies, just for you! and didn't you read my old one too? is this one better so

far?**_

**writer51: I hope that this story can keep that promise!**

**Spacefan: well, yeah. well, this is how I see things: lets say one of us normal people were on a covenant ship and you wanna get off without getting killed. well, the only way to do that is to go along with it until you get help. cuz no one can take on a WHOLE covenant cruiser on their own. not that they have to, but in war you always have to assume the worst will happen. so, I hope that clears up any small confusions.**

**Robo-Chocobo: yes, I realize that, but what about Keyes? so there are a few exceptions to this taking prisoners rule. and, what if the Covenant were working on a secret project and needed a test subject? (hint, hint) don't worry, all will be explained in due time.**

**Kulatu: you're flaming? doesn't seem like it! you're a very nice person! in a somewhat criticizing way... any way. it's only slightly AU. it still follows the story line and it's not like there are weird occurrences that are in no way related to the Halo idea.**

**red blood white feathers: woohoo! another old fan! sorta... dunno about the fan part. I haven't exactly written enough to have fans yet! just don't tell everyone what happens, k? and I did change it enough so that its not exactly the same. so it shouldn't bore you. I hope.**

**hmm... I don't wanna know how long it's been since I last updated. school. ah, the horror! and science isn't fun! and here I am writing a science fiction fic. how weird will I get? any wayz. I'm REALLY sorry for the long delay. I'll try really hard to get as much done as possible whenever possible without rushing and leaving plot holes.**

The sky was a deep purple when Gina emerged from a barracks in the marine's fortress, Alpha Base. She didn't exactly feel comfortable inside with the marines that weren't on patrol duty. Captain Keyes had let her come back to the base with them, why she still couldn't figure out.

"You there. Gina." Gina turned around to see a marine, female, coming her way. Obviously word had gotten out about her. "I'm Lieutenant McKay. Captain Keyes would like to speak to you." Gina nodded and said nothing, following McKay to the Captain's makeshift office. The Master Chief was there too, standing off to the side.

"Thank you, Lieutenant; you can go." McKay saluted sharply and left. "Now." Keyes said once she had closed the door. "I don't know where you came from and I probably don't want to, do I?" Figuring this was a rhetorical question, Gina didn't answer. "Why you are here, I don't know and why you're helping us, I don't know. But you're human, and you're going to help us. Right?"

"Yes sir." Gina replied quickly. Keyes nodded, satisfied.

"You know a lot more about the Covenant than we all do, so enlighten me. Do you know where the control room to Halo is?" Gina shook her

head.

"No sir. They kept coordinates quite safe and out of my ears. I do, however, know the location of a map room."

"Yes, the Cartographer. We know about that." Keyes replied. "Alright then. You will go with the Master Chief and a group of Marines to the Cartographer and find the location of the control room. We've got to get find out what the Covenant are using Halo for. You'll both board the pelicans there in another hour."

"Yes sir." Gina and the Chief said in unison. Gina glanced at MC out of the corner of her eye, but she couldn't read the soldier's expression from behind the visor.

"And get your self some armor, _Private _Gina. Let our engineers tinker with that Covenant suit." the Captain added. Gina paused, slightly surprised by this statement, then nodded.

"Yes sir!"

"It's gonna be hot!" the pilot yelled back to her passengers as the two Pelicans approached the small island. Ground forces were already shooting at them from below. The Pelican turned itself around as it landed so that the marines were facing the on coming Covenant. "Touch down! Hit it, Marines!" the pilot yelled at the Marines from her controls. MC was the first out, Gina and a boatload of Marines right behind him. The other Pelican was also unloading its passengers, some of them already firing.

Private Gina dropped to one knee and fired her pistol at the grunts that so eagerly rushed to meet their enemies. The word private was still ringing in her ears since that morning. Gina was just as confused about the Captains actions as everyone else stuck on the ring world was. What had he been trying to do? Make it official that she was on the Marines side? Gina was still confused. But she tried not to think about that as she rushed forward, slamming the butt of her pistol down on a Jackal's head. A few marines and some guns later, the large group gathered under a bridge like support.

_Echo 419 inbound. Did somebody order a Warthog?" _the pilot asked over the com unit. The eye piece flickered as a yellow dot labeled Echo 419 approached them again.

"You think of everything, Foehammer. I didn't know you made house calls." a marine announced.

You know our motto," Foehammer replied. _"We deliver!"_ The Pelican swooped low again, now dropping a Warthog down near the marines.

"Can you drive this?" MC asked Gina as they approached the vehicle. Gina bit her lip, examining the controls.

"Looks easy enough. Why?" she asked, jumping in.

"It would take longer for you to learn these controls." the Master Chief replied, jumping in the back and manning the Hog's guns. One Marine jumped in side seat and Gina gunned the engine. She took another quick look around her, trying to familiarize herself, then

slammed the accelerator, and they took off.

short, yes. I'm sorry it couldn't be longer after so long a wait, but I'm sure you want something sooner rather than nothing for a while longer. I'll try to get some thing more next weekend.

flaminchica

4. The Control Room

**_okay, maybe NOT next weekendâ€|
> I feel special! more reviews! **

**_-

Sage-Doomhunter: thanks for the review! getting reviews at all is really great for me. not many people write serious Halo fics, and the funky ones get a lot of reviews, I've noticed.

PMOHWinters: well, yes, I suppose it is sort of like that, but that's not what it's all about. I've also read THE FLOOD and I'm trying to not copy it exactly without straying too far from the whole line of plot. besides, they gotta get off the ring, right? don't worry, just stick with me and I'll show some more originality as I get farther along.

**_-

writer51: fast enough? probably not. I'm the slowest person on earth sometimes, but then a speed demon another time. I'm so weird like that. hope I'm not too extremely slow, though. glad you're liking it!

Ghost1800- am glad that you don't find many (if any) mistakes. grammar is not my best subject. look at that. an author with bad spelling and grammar. --'

Dark Dragoon 22- thank you! don't mind if I do!

thanks again for the reviews! 18 is a big number for me. this is the most reviews I've ever gotten (along with the 16 I have for a JSRF fic, but some of ya'll might not know what that game isâ€|). I think I got about 8 reviews on the fic that this is a remake ofâ€| and I hadâ€| about 10 or 12 chaptersâ€| yeah, well, I'm obviously doing better this time! :P

MC only had to give the door a few good hits and a grenade to realize that it wasn't going to open for him. Gina leaned against the wall next the installation's door, giving a couple of grunts a few more rounds to the head before reloading her rifle, satisfied.

"What's the problem?" she asked, examining the door.

"We can't get the door open. The Covenant must have rigged a security system." Cortana replied over the Chief's speakers.

"Wouldn't put it past 'em." Gina replied before locating a hand pad near the door. "I wonderâ€|" she muttered, placing her hand over the

pad. A beam flashed and scanned her hand. There were a few beeps and the computer hummed for a moment. The pad finally chimed and the door slid open. "Ha! Idiots." she laughed. "They haven't taken a full count of all dead on the Truth yet. My DNA is still in their system." She laughed internally for a moment. Covenant losses were normally counted up pretty quickly and the dead were identified just as fast. If they hadn't figured out she was missing, then they must not be having a very easy time with all the dead bodies the group of Marines had left behind with their success.

Gina thought she heard MC chuckle, but she couldn't count on it. The two of them and the other Marine began to search the building the Silent Cartographer was supposed to be located. Down into the depths of the installation they went, finding little resistance until they got to what might have been the third or fourth level down, but Gina had lost count awhile back.

"Movement up ahead." MC hushed through their com links. Gina's own motion tracker was dotted in red. She watched their movement, then said,

"Two hunters in the back. A few grunts, maybe a Jackal or two." MC acknowledged this with a quick check of his ammunition and a quick reload to his pistol.

"Try and save your bullets. Head and chest shots only. We don't know how far down this goes and how many Covenant are waiting for us as we go." he said. Gina gave the ammo on her belt a quick check before following MC around the corner.

Gina found a good hiding spot behind a couple of Covenant crates that were lying sideways. She crouched low and used the scope on the pistol to more accurately pick off the grunts. The two Jackals that occupied the room were both well protected behind their energy shields and Gina didn't think it wise to try and bring them down with the few bullets it would take. Activating a plasma grenade, she tossed it high.

The grenade found a resting place on the top of one energy shield. Surprised, the Jackal tried to shake it loose, though Gina thought it should be smarter than that. The plasma exploded, sending the two Jackals sprawling. Only one got back to its feet. As the Jackal staggered to stand, Gina took the shot and it fell back down, twitching once before dying.

MC, who had been dealing with the one Elite that Gina had failed to predict, switched to his assault rifle without reloading his pistol. He turned sideways to see that the Marine had met the Hunters. Although he was fighting more wisely than another of the Marines that had met a Hunter with MC that day, he didn't think he'd have been able to survive the firefight without having the Spartan there.

MC unloaded half a round into one of the Hunter's heads, which was enough to silence the beast since the Marine had already down a considerable amount of damage. The two humans turned together on the second Hunter, who let out a war cry and charged. The Chief made a fast sidestep and tried to get as many bullets into the Covenant alien as possible. The Marine, however, wasn't fast enough. Half way through jumping away, the Hunter's large shield came in contact with his upper thighs and back. He slammed into the wall, coughing blood

as he sunk to the ground.

Suddenly, Gina opened fire on the Hunter, who turned away from the Marine and charged to fire. MC emptied the rest of his clip into the alien, catching it in crossfire. The Hunter roared, letting the plasma from his cannon of a gun loose. Gina dived out of the way and rolled behind the corner of the hall. The Master Chief then found himself faced with a Hunter and an empty gun. He shoved another clip into the assault rifle as fast as possible and raised to fire again when the Hunter roared and crumpled.

The Marine, leaning against the wall, shakily stood straighter and managed a grin. Gina was also smiling, her eyes downcast as she shook her head and reloaded both her weapons.

"Get yourself topside and get a Pelican back to Alpha Base." MC ordered. The Marine nodded, looking slightly grateful and disappointed at the same time.

"Yes sir." he said. The Marine limped away. The Master Chief reloaded his pistol, then motioned for Gina to follow.

The two continued down to what Gina hoped to be the bottom level. There were multiple Jackals patrolling the area. Gina crouched down and sighted a few with her pistol. She took the shots, taking them down, but also alerting the other Covenant around the fallen patrol. The Chief ran around Gina and into a group of Grunts, who hardly had time to give their guns a lot of charge before the Spartan pulled the trigger on them.

"Elites on your three." Gina told him over the COM. "I'll see what I can do from here." A few shots rang out as MC turned to face the oncoming Elites. One of the Elite's shields flickered once and died, allowing the second shot to penetrate its elongated skull. The second elite roared and charged, firing plasma at the Chief, who unleashed his own wave of fire. The Elite's shields held for a few seconds, then died. Half a clip of ammunition was unleashed into the Elite's middle section and Gina provided a shot to the neck. The Elite crumpled and lay in a pool of its own blood. Gina ran down the ramp the Chief had come down, grabbing her assault rifle. She halted pulling the trigger on another Elite that had been coming up behind him. The Chief grabbed his pistol and shot. The Elite gagged blood and fell over.

Gina tried not to grin, but she couldn't help not to think how good they were working together. Gina reloaded her pistol and gave her ammunition a quick check.

"We're here." Cortana said over the Chief's speakers as the two entered a small room. "This is it." A holographic image of Halo appeared, splitting off into sections and enlarging. "There." Part of the map flashed. "This is where the control center is."

"Then lets hop to it." Gina said, looking past the map.

"Problem?" Chief asked. Gina fired four shots.

"Not any more, sir." she replied, reloading her pistol. The Chief's mouth twitched into a small smile, but Gina didn't see that behind his visor. The two soldiers ran up the ramps leading back up to the

top of the installation. They encountered less resistance on the way up than down. The occasional Jackal pair would try to stop them, but they never had a chance.

"Echo 419, we are ready for immediate pickup." Cortana announced over the COM.

"Roger, Cortana. Echo 419 inbound." Foehammer replied. The COM clicked off.

"Almost to the top again, sir. Sensors read all clear." Gina said calmly as they started down a dark hall. The Chief grabbed her arm and shook his head. Gina cocked an eyebrow, but nodded and crouched low, inching along the hall. The Master Chief took the other side of the hall, also inching along slowly.

MC nodded ever slightly, so slightly that Gina wouldn't have noticed it if she hadn't been looking at him for some sort of sign. He was crouched in a corner, assault rifle pointed at something on the other side of the wall Gina was using as cover.

The Spartan stood and opened fire, backing away towards Gina as the Elite ran out, activating its beam sword. Gina pulled the trigger on her pistol, driving a few rounds into the Field Commander's chest. The gold armored Elite took a swing at her and Gina had to take a giant leap backward to avoid getting hit. She landed on her back with a thump, but she didn't feel any pain, besides the slight burn she felt from the swords near contact with her.

The Elite let out a mighty roar and ran at her. Still on the ground, she sat up and continued shooting. MC stood a little ways behind her, a continuing stream of bullets coming from his assault rifle. Gina ran out of ammo. Closing one eye, she aimed and threw the spent weapon at the Elite. The Elite attempted to dodge, but Gina had aimed off, so that when the Elite did dodge, the human weapon hit it on its helmet just above the eyes. Momentarily stunned, the Elite staggered, giving Gina time to jump onto her feet and grab her assault rifle. There was no real need, though, because the Chief emptied the last of his assault rifle ammo into the Elite's chest. With a final roar, it fell onto the ground. Gina kicked it to make sure it stayed on the ground.

"We should get to the Pelican before they send more troops." Cortana suggested, sounding both eager and impatient.

"Right." Gina replied, grabbing the Elite's side arm, just in case.

"Let's move." the Master Chief said, leading the way back down the hall.

The two emerged from the installation a minute later. Foehammer was already waiting for them, firing the guns attached to its belly at the group of Grunts and Jackals heading towards the installation. Gina climbed in across from MC and closed her eyes. She suddenly realized how tired she was, not getting any sleep the night before. Giving the Master Chief one last glance, she closed her eyes for a well-deserved nap.

"This is as far as I can go!" Foehammer's voice awakened Gina. She

carefully leaned out of the drop ship to see where they were. She pulled her head back in like a tortoise into its shell when she saw the long drop below.

"How are we- never mind." Gina muttered, figuring that if the Chief hadn't woken her up, then how the hell they got into an installation with a Pelican wasn't important.

The Pelican touched down on the ledge and MC and Gina jumped out. Just as they were walking away, Foehammer asked,

_ "What was the point of that tunnel, Cortana?" _Cortana chuckled over the COM.

"Just think of it this way, Foehammer. The Covenant wouldn't expect an aerial assault from under ground." Gina had to chuckle at that logic.

"Take a Shade. I saw some Grunts retreat through that door." the Chief said, head jerking in the direction of the door. "They might be coming back with friends." Gina jumped into the Shade and grabbed the controls, swiveling the movable turret in the direction of the door. The Chief had run to the other side of the door and took the controls of the other Shade. Just as he swiveled the turret's guns towards the door, it opened and a group of Grunts ran out. The two turrets opened fire and the Grunts, along with the second wave, a group of three Jackals, were fried. One Elite ran out, much to his mistake, and only got three shots off before, it too, fell. One plasma bolt hit her shoulder. She cringed slightly, but her armor took most of the damage.

When nobody else came out of the door, Gina climbed out of the turret. The Chief jumped out as well and jogged over to the door. Satisfied that there was no one else behind the door, he led the way down the hall.

After a long hour and a half of riding, walking, and continuous fire, Gina dropped to one knee in the snow. Four or five marines stood in scattered formation, all of them looking slightly worn out. Their Pelican had crashed back where the Chief and Gina had exited out of the installation leading to the underground tunnel.

Gina caught her breath, then stared up at the structure before them. It looked like a great big temple with many ramps leading up to the top, where the control room was. Whether the ramps were all separate or if they were all one, Gina couldn't tell.

A Pelican landed near by and the battle tired marines looked quite a bit relieved. Most of them had already begun making their way to the drop ship before the Chief ordered,

"All Marines, get to Alpha Base." There was a short pause. Gina stood, biting her lip, before deciding that order pertained her as well. "Gina, you're with me." Much more satisfied with this order, Gina followed MC towards the Control Center. She felt much more comfortable on the battlefield than back with a bunch of Marines who she didn't know.

"Yes sir!" she exclaimed, picking up the pace so she could catch up.

The canyon was scattered with a few patrols, who were already making their way to the advancing pair. A Wraith tank was off to one side of the canyon, but the rocket launcher on the Chief's back gave her reassurance.

"Take care of the ground troops. I've got the tank." MC said, almost reading her mind. Gina placed her assault rifle gingerly on the ground and swung her sniper rifle in front of her. She adjusted her hold on it until the stock felt comfortable enough against her shoulder.

She magnified the scope x2 and scanned the ground, taking out the on coming Elites first, then the two Jackals that were coming up behind those. She stopped to reload.

"Move." The command was calm, yet demanding. Gina jogged a few meters away from where she had originally been standing. The ground shook slightly as the large ball of plasma hit the ground. MC, who had run in the opposite direction, unleashed two rockets. The Wraith shuddered and smoked, but released another plasma bomb.

Gina shouldered the sniper again and found four more targets. She reloaded again, her last four shots, and scanned the ramps up, hoping to make it an easier 'climb'.

The marine jogged up to the Master Chief, who gave his last shot to a group of Grunts and Jackals. Bodies flew in all directions and blood splattered the white snow.

"That wasn't so hard now, was it?" Gina joked as the two of them made their way up. It didn't take long before they reached the top.

Gina dived and MC rolled behind a Covenant crate as two Shades opened up on them. Hot plasma soared over Gina's head. Grunting, she crouched low and ran for better cover than the gunner's bad aim.

Gina primed and threw a grenade at one turret, watching it over turn and dump its dead gunner to the ground. A few Jackals around it dived away, and only half of them got back up. Seeing that the Master Chief had taken care of the other Shade, Gina ran out from behind the overturned crate and helped take care of the remaining Covenant.

The Chief and Gina both reloaded their weapons, Gina exchanging her spent sniper rifle for a plasma rifle. The Chief punched a door command and the large blast door groaned open.

The two soldiers once again found themselves in a firefight. Gina threw a plasma grenade into a group of Grunts. Squealing and barking they began to scatter, but not before the grenade detonated. Gina focused her attention on the two 'rookie' Elites, their blue armor glinting. Gina threw her last plasma grenade, which stuck to on Elite's shoulder. The Elite quickly began to peel it off and was about to throw it back when it exploded in its hands.

The second Elite roared for its fallen comrade and charged at Gina, firing plasma. Gina pulled the trigger of her own plasma rifle and let it overheat. She tossed the hot rifle at the Elite. Its shields had fallen and the plasma bolts scarred its armor. The gun knocked

into the Elite's chest, knocking it backwards. The Chief opened fire on the winded Elite and the warrior fell.

"You have a think for throwing guns around, don't you?" MC asked, tossing her rifle back. Gina caught it, grinning.

"That was an accident. I'd forgotten how hot these things get." she said, following the Spartan down the wide halls.

The Control Room was a large, round room. The ceiling was high above their heads and the floor was a long drop below them. The platform that they were on led out to a round circular platform with a single console on it. Their footsteps echoed as they approached.

"There." Cortana said. "That slot." The Chief yanked a ship from his helmet and carefully sliding it into the slot.

Cortana's image appeared before them. She turned red, yellow, then green, before changing to her normal purple. Blue codes scrolled down her body. Gina, who was seeing her for the first time, was slightly amazed.

"Amazing!" the AI exclaimed.

"What is?" Gina asked, cocking an eyebrow.

"So much, so fast! It's wonderful!" Cortana, not really replying.

"Is there anything about using Halo there?" the Chief asked. "How do we use it against the Covenant?"

"What are you talking about?" Cortana snapped, placing her hands on her hips.

"Ummâ€|" Gina would have scratched her head, had her helmet not been in the way. "Where have you been the past few hours?"

"Let's try and stay on task here." MC said, trying to be patient. "Is the ring a weapon? How do we use it?"

"It's not just a weapon, it's much more than that." Cortana said, her voice sounding slightly annoyed. "Give me a second to access something. Yesâ€| Those Covenant fools!" she exclaimed. Gina was now even more confused. "They must have known, there must have been signs!"

"Slow down, now. You're losing us." the Chief said, sounding as equally confused as Gina felt.

"Captain Keyes! You've got to stop the Captain!" Cortana yelled. Gina blinked. Keyes? What about Keyes?

"What?" MC and Gina said in unison.

"There's no time!" the AI yelled. "The weapon cache he's looking forâ€| You've got to find Keyes and stop him!" MC reached for Cortana's chip. "No. I've got to stay here. Now go!" The Chief turned and ran back to the hallway. Still confused, Gina followed.

"Before it's too late!" Cortana called after them. Gina heard MC click on the COM.

"This is Spartan one-one-seven to Echo 419. Requesting pickup, on the double."

it's been too longâ€|. hopefully I can use this three day weekend to my advantage. hopefully I'll see you all again sooner than last timeâ€|

flaminchica

5. The Parasite

wellâ€|â€| uhâ€| hmmmmmm. yeah, this is sooooo sad.

you might be wondering why it's been taking me so dang long to get another chapter up. well let me tell ya, my computer needs surgery or something.

**_a couple of months ago I was having writers block for this fic, so I go play halo, which always cures my blockage. so I come back to the computer to find that SOMETHING is wrong with it and I can't figure out what. so that's why I'm so late. and! you know what else? I'm getting a little pissed because not all of my computer problems are solved, obviously, because I'm sitting here using an on-screen keyboard because my real one has an issue.
grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr._**

Ghost1800: die off? uhhhhhâ€| heh heh. well, I don't plan to, but considering how long it's taken, fans might have to waitâ€|. awhile. flaminchica doesn't really mean muchâ€|. just something I made up. chica means girl in spanish, and I'm a girl, so yeah. flamin's just there because I think fire's pretty cool. so that's my name!

Dark Dragoon 22: hurry? umm, sorry. obviously I can't hold a deadline because of my crazy computer. hope you'll stick around, though!

Sage-Doomhunter: thanks! I'll check that out!

dumass44: with pleasure!

_The captain's last message was from this area." _ Foehammer's voice crackled over the COM. Gina and MC jumped out of the back of the Pelican without a reply. _"Call me when you're ready for evac."_

The swamp water sloshed as Gina followed MC to higher ground. Over head, an out of control Covenant drop ship sailed down. There was an explosion as the craft crashed somewhere ahead of them.

"Wonder how that happened." Gina murmured.

"Let's check the crash site for survivors." MC replied, continuing forward. Gina followed close behind.

The two found the smoking ruins crashed into the wall of a short cliff. Two Grunts and a Jackal were running away from their destroyed

ship.

"Where do you suppose they were going?" MC asked, crouching low beside the ship. Gina shrugged.

"Probably the same place their headed now." she replied as MC stood up again.

"Let's follow them. It's possible that they could lead us to Keyes." the Spartan said, running stealthily far behind the retreating Covenant. Gina followed him.

"You don't suppose Keyes has been captured again, do you?" Gina whispered.

"We'll assume the worse for now." the Chief replied, crouching behind a bush as the Jackal stopped to sniff the air. Gina hid behind a clump of trees, trying to make herself scarce. The Jackal sniffed again, then ran to catch up with the Grunts. MC signaled with his hand and the two continued to follow the unsuspecting Covenant.

After a short jog, the Covenant started climbing a log up to the top of the ridge. Crouching in the swamp's bushes, the two soldiers spotted a Shade at the top of the ridge.

"I think they've reached their destination." MC whispered. "Let's go." Gina nodded and primed a grenade. She hefted it up at the Shade as MC used his Assault Rifle to knock the Grunts and Jackal off the log. The Shade flipped as the grenade exploded, crushing its operator.

"Someone probably heard that." MC said, jogging up the log. Gina shrugged and followed him up.

"We'll just kick their butts too." she replied as she scanned the slope down to some trees. Nothing was on the slope, but Gina couldn't say the same about the trees. The two walked down into the trees, guns at the ready. They discovered a couple of Grunts sleeping around an un-operated Shade. A good whack on the head took care of them and the two soldiers continued out into the open.

They stood in front of a small structure with a large opening that sloped down deeper into the ground. A few Grunts and Jackals were defending the structure. Guns blazing, MC and Gina got into the structure.

"This lift goes one way." Gina said as they stepped onto the elevator lift. "Down."

"Lets go." MC replied and Gina hit a button on the control panel. The mechanics in the lift whirred and they began their decent.

The structure was silent as they got off the lift. No one was around. Guns ready, MC lead them through the structure. Soon, in a narrow hallway, they discovered a dead Jackal, it's purple blood and insides in a mess on the floor.

"That's disgusting." Gina said, making a face.

"What about this blood?" MC asked indicating the green blood smeared on the wall. He seemed completely unfazed.

"There isn't a body?" Gina asked. MC shook his head.

"Just the blood."

"I've got a bad feeling about this. Nothing loses this much blood and walks away alive." she replied.

"It wasn't Covenant, we know that much. It was probably something a lot bigger." MC assumed.

"Bigger?" Gina scoffed. "There aren't many big things that can fit in this hallway." She touched the ceiling with to prove her point. MC didn't reply as the two walked away from the dead Covenant. Gina made it a point not to get Jackal guts on her boots.

The next set of doors slid open, revealing a Marine sitting on the floor, leaning against the wall.

"Get away from me!" he screamed. "Don't come any closer! You can't take me!" MC and Gina glanced at one another before taking a careful step towards the crazed Marine.

"Don't come any closer!" the Marine yelled, fumbling with his pistol and shooting wildly. Gina ducked a wild shot and MC hit the floor.

"Give me that!" Gina growled, jumping for the gun. The Marine screamed and fired at the ceiling before Gina wrenched from his hands. MC grabbed the Marine by the shoulders and shook him.

"Snap out of it, Marine!" he yelled in his face. The crazed man just continued to rant. MC slapped him.

"I'm gonna die!" the marine yelled.

"MC, I don't think he's gonna snap out of it." Gina said softly. MC sighed and nodded. Gina shot him in the head, then carefully laid the gun in the marine's limp hand. "Lets keep moving."

As impossible as it seemed, Gina thought the installment was getting quieter and creepier the farther into it they went. They found nothing else but dead bodies before they came down to a locked door. A code breaker was placed on the side of the door. MC reached to press a button on it. The two soldiers froze as they heard a scratching sound. Gina leveled her gun and peeked around the corners. Nothing was there. She turned to MC and shrugged. MC turned back to the door and opened it.

The silence was broken by Gina's short yelp of surprise as a Marine fell through the opening door. MC quickly caught the body and dragged it in the next chamber, Gina following behind. Both of them had guns up and ready. A few more Marines were dead to their left. The rest of the room was empty.

"What happened here?" Gina asked, barely audible. MC laid the body down and picked up and abandoned helmet. The label read
Jenkins.

"I don't know. Are any of them alive?" MC asked, indicating the Marines. Gina checked.

"No. No sign of Captain Keyes or Sargent Johnson." she replied. "And these guys weren't killed by Covenant, by the looks of it." MC looked at the helmet again.

"What about this Jenkins guy?" MC asked. Gina checked the Marines' dog tags.

"No. Why?" MC set his gun down and examined the helmet.

"There's a possibility that Keyes, Johnson, and Jenkins escaped together." he said, taking the recording equipment out of the helmet.

"That still doesn't answer what happened." Gina reminded him.

"Well, we're about to find out." He took the tape and jammed it into a slot in the back of his helmet. Gina bit her lip and continued to scan the empty room.

After what seemed like an eternity, MC removed the chip and grabbed up his gun.

"What? What did you see?" Gina asked.

"We're getting out of here. Now." was his only reply.

"Chief, what's going on?" Gina asked as the scratching started up again.

"Where's that noise coming from?" MC asked. Gina shook her head.

"I can't tell. What's making it?" MC turned to look at her, then pointed with his gun.

"Those things." Gina turned to see little yellowish brown spores skittering towards them. The two humans shot at them, discovering that they exploded easily.

"What are they?" Gina asked once they were all gone.

"I don't know, but they must have killed the Marines." MC replied.
"Look, here come some more."

Waves of the spores came out of nowhere. Once one wave had been dealt with, more came out. In a pause between waves, MC and Gina made a break for the door.

The only problem with the door option was the large tentacled creature was coming in through it. It was about the size on an elite, a yellowish brown color, and coming at them fast. The creature jumped at them, lashing out with its tentacles. Gina dropped and rolled to the side as MC simply jumped away, sending a stream of bullets at the creature. Gina opened fire as well, having to duck another swinging tentacle before the creature fell over. The two didn't check to see if it was dead before they ran out.

Throughout the complex, the two encountered the spores and their larger forms. By time they made it to the lift, they were both almost out of ammo. Gina punched the lift button and the machinery groaned and began moving. In the wrong direction.

"Crud." Gina hissed, repeatedly hitting the up button over and over. The lift continued on its way down lower into the installation.

"There isn't another control panel." the Chief commented, sweeping the room with his gun. "We're going to have to find another way up.

"Great. Because I was just hoping to get to know these aliens better." Gina replied sarcastically, checking her ammo. Her pistol was almost depleted and her assault rifle was down to the last clip.

"You take right, I got left." MC told her, ignoring her comment. The two cautiously went around either sides of the wall, discovering nothing was there. Still on guard, they went through the door, Gina on point. She ducked instinctively and searched for cover as she heard rifle fire. Crouching behind a turned Shade, Gina shot at the quickly approaching aliens. MC was behind a corner, shooting at things that came too close in range.

Tossing her spent rifle down, Gina shot an oncoming form with her pistol, firing rapidly. It kept coming. She slammed the butt of her weapon down on its head and it crumpled. Sighing in relief, Gina reloaded her weapon and turned to MC.

"Ready, sir."

"Watch out!" he barked. Gina didn't ask questions and hit the floor. He fired his rifle over her head and the creature fell down again.

"Dirty little buggers." Gina muttered, stepping on the creature's spinal cord before it got up again. At least she figured that's where its spinal cord wasâ€!

The two grabbed what ammo they could and quickly hurried through the rest of the installation. The spores were continuously coming out of nowhere, the larger forms were getting more and more aggressive with their weapons fire, and the Master Chief and Gina were constantly scrambling to get ammo and stay alive.

Both were glad to see the lift port after the last spore in the room and been taken care of. Gina checked her shoulder, discovering a wide gash under her half destroyed armor plating. Things were not going well. The Chief touched the key pad and there were a few clicks. The screeching of metal against metal raged and the lift, crushed and on fire, raced past them and down lower into the installation. There was a large crash when it landed many kilometers below.

"What now, sir?" Gina asked, wiping some sweat from her face. The Chief stood there for a second, examining their possibilities before speaking.

"What's your weapon status?" Gina quickly went over her weapons

again.

"Pistol has two clips left, shotgun has a good twenty four shots left on it." she replied. MC hefted his own shotgun and reloaded it.

"Use the shotguns for now; they seem to work best against these things." he replied, heading towards the door again. Gina hoped they wouldn't come across much more trouble, considering how many bodies were dead on the ground. But that wasn't the case as more of the monsters raged at them and others, who had been dead moments before, were madly running at them again.

"Do you have any clue where we're going?" Gina yelled above the noise of gunfire. MC backed up to a wall, shooting at the oncoming enemy.

"No. You?" he asked, quickly shoving more rounds into his shotgun. Gina shot three more forms in the heads before replying.

"This place is a maze! We could be going in circles for all we know!" She reloaded her guns and policed the ammo from their enemy.

"We'll go through here." MC said, and Gina didn't argue. He was the better judge of the whole deal. In the next room, the parasite ran ravage on the bottom floor. The light bridge to the other side was inactive, but the panel for it appeared operational. With a jerk of his head, MC directed Gina to hide behind a Covenant crate. He crouched and inched toward the panel, hoping for as little contact as possible.

"Chief!" Gina hissed, crouching behind the crate. "Catch!" She tossed him a Covenant Environmental cloak. The crate was broken open in front of her. She herself shimmered then disappeared as she activated her own. MC activated the bridge, then the two sprinted across. They reached the other side and the aliens below were still in their own frenzy, oblivious to the light bridge. The door hissed open and the two left the room.

A few forms walked lazily around the lift and a group of parasite skittered around in a corner. Gina watched as a grenade flew out of the air beside her and landed in the midst of the spores. The forms were suddenly alert as they saw it sail over head and ran towards its origin. Gina ran left, MC to the right, both just a shimmer in the darkened installation. Gina came up behind the confused parasite and whacked its back with the shotgun. The form fell limply and Gina had enough time to stomp on it before the other forms turned to her. Gina jerked from the force of the shotgun as she shot one form in the chest. The third one fell behind it and a shimmer whacked its fallen body, squirting green blood. The spores, of course, had popped at the detonation of the grenade.

The two got on the lift and MC pushed the button. Gina let out a sight of relief as the lift lurched and went up.

"Finally." she murmured, but still kept her gun up. She wouldn't feel safe until she was out of this swamp.

A group of ragged Marines stood outside the installation, murmuring softly. When they saw the Chief, they ran up.

"Oh, God are we glad to see you sir." one said, breathing heavily.
"We just got out of that mess down there."

"Have you seen Captain Keyes, marine?" MC asked, leading the group slowly away from the looming building.

"No sir." the marine quickly replied. "We haven't seen Sargent Johnson either."

"Wonderful." Gina muttered.

"But we have made contact with Foehammer." the marine continued.
"Evac is on the way." At that moment, the COM crackled.

"Marines! There isn't any good place to set down. There's a tower just northeast of your position. I'll meet you there."

"Roger, Foehammer. Master Chief out." the Spartan replied and killed the connection. Without having to be told, the ragged group began to sprint away from the construct.

They had only gotten a few meters before spores began skittering towards them, coming from where they were trying to go. The marines shot wildly at them, continuing on as quickly as possible. They spotted the town in the distance.

"Tighten up your lines of fire!" the Chief barked. "Take on one at a time." The sound of shotgun fire and the gurgles of the parasite echoed across the swamp. Gina's boots sloshed through water as the giant tower construct. The marines pulled into a circle and defended themselves from the enemy. The Chief jumped up on a boulder and took a sniping position with his pistol. The roar of Pelican engines was not far away.

Surprisingly, the large amounts of parasite began to dwindle. Sentinels shooting beams or orange energy began appearing from nowhere, burning down the quickly approaching enemy. Gina relaxed and looked over at the boulder, expecting to see the Chief. He wasn't there. She quickly did a double take and scanned the area. The Spartan was standing on top of one of the tower's spires, a small glowing blue orb floating in front of him.

"Hey, Chief!" she yelled, beginning to approach the tower. The Master Chief turned to look at her, but before either of them could do anything, beams of orange surrounded him and the orb. When the beams disappeared, both had disappeared. "Chief!" The COM crackled again.

"Chief? I've lost your signal." Foehammer set down and Marines began to pile in. "Chief? Chief?"

"He's not here." Gina replied, jumping into the Pelican. She hardly believed it herself.

"Then where the hell is he?" the pilot demanded.

"I don't know! Just get us out of here!" Foehammer hesitated before lifting the pelican back into the air. "And take me back to the control room. I gotta talk to Cortana."

**_okay. sad that it took this longâ€¦ sorry. hopefully, I'll get the next chapter done faster, but it all depends on my computer.
unfortunatly._**

6. Separated

**so here I am again, hopefully not as long a wait as beforeâ€¦**

**and here is my completely random disclaimer to the best game in the world.**

"You sure you don't need back up? I can spare a few marines." Foehammer asked. Gina jumped out of the pelican and clicked the COM.

"I got it handled, Foehammer. Those Covenant patrols look like toys compared to that parasite." she said. The Pelican lifted away from the ground.

_ "Give 'em hell for me." _ Foehammer's voice crackled and then the connection was cut. Gina lifted her pistol and magnified the scope to x2. The Covenant had retaken the Control Room, or at least the outside of it. Jackal pairs were patrolling the ramps up the structure and Gina could see that the shades were manned again. She was surprised she hadn't been seen yet. She quickly marched across the snow and up the ridge. Sighting with her pistol, she took out one Jackal patrol and a Grunt, who was operating the Shade. She jogged up the ramp to the shade, reloading her pistol. Two more Jackals had heard the commotion and were running towards her, shields up. Knowing normal fire couldn't burn down the shields, Gina quickly swung herself into the turret and sent blasts of plasma at the Jackals. They reeled backwards, but kept their shields up. They glowed bright red, then dropped with a sizzle of plasma. The remaining plasma blasts scorched the vulture-like aliens.

With that taken care of, Gina hopped down and jogged to the next ramp. The Grunt on the Shade opened up before Gina had fully turned the corner. She shrunk back around the corner and primed a grenade. She ducked around the corner and tossed it under the movable turret. She was rewarded with a flash of fire and smoke. The Shade flipped and landed with a crunch of metal. Satisfied, Gina made her way to the top level.

Peeking around the corner, she saw that two Shades had been set up and were in the process of burning down the door. A couple of Elites stood nearby, monitoring the situation. There were also two Jackals, one on either side of the door. A unit of Grunts were chattering and barking a good ways away from the Elites, right near where Gina was hiding. Gina quickly withdrew and primed another grenade. She chuckd it into the middle of the group and hid around the corner again. There were a few barks of surprise and panic, but were quickly silenced by a small explosion. There was a second crash, telling Gina that the explosion had also taken out one of the Shades. There was a roar from one of the Elites and Gina quickly grabbed her shotgun, knowing that the blue-clad Elite, signifying it rookie status, would run headlong into any attack. Just as she suspected, the warrior ran around the corner, its plasma rifle leveled. Gina shot it in the chest, and then again in the head once his shields were

down.

Stepping over the fallen Elite, the Marine primed a plasma grenade and tossed it at a Shade, where it stuck to the Grunt operator. The closest Jackal shot at her with its plasma pistol, but Gina quickly evaded the bullets and kicked its arm, sending it sprawling. With its shield lowered, Gina had a clear shot at its head, which she took gladly.

The remaining Shade quickly swiveled and fired at her. Gina ducked and took cover behind the other turret. Lying on the ground, she shot the second Jackal and tossed a second plasma grenade under the Shade. The Elite, clad in the red of the veterans, primed a plasma grenade and tossed it her direction. Gina dived away. A second later, the Shade she had been hiding behind erupted in a plasma explosion. The Elite wasted no time firing at her, although being careful not to overheat his weapon. Gina took that to her advantage. Whenever he stopped firing, she quickly moved in closer and tried to get a shot off. Soon, he was lying on the ground with the other fallen aliens.

Gina checked the door, finding them securely locked, most likely by Cortana. Gina clicked on the COM.

"Gina to Cortana. Do you read me?"

_ "Loud and clear. It's about time you showed up. I'm unlocking the doors now." _ the AI's voice rang out clearly over the COM channel. There was a hiss and the door opened. The soldier quickly marched to the Control Room, the large door closing behind her.

Cortana's image had her back to Gina as she walked down the platform to the control panel. Characters scrolled down Cortana's body as she changed colors from purple, to blue, to green and back to purple. Gina had little, if any, involvement with AI's during her lifetime, so Cortana amazed her. She didn't let the smart AI notice that, however.

"So what's going on?" Gina demanded. "Why didn't you tell us what was in that building?"

"Because," Cortana said, waving her hand in a dismissive manner, "I didn't fully understand what this ring was about at that point."

"And you do now?" Gina asked, setting her shotgun on the floor. She noticed the AI's eyes were moving back and forth, as though reading something that wasn't there.

"Mostly. Probably more than the Covenant do, at least." she replied. She pulled up a piece of camera footage. "I suppose you've been wondering what the Chief's doing." Gina moved closer to the frame. The Chief was fighting off the parasite in a darkened corridor. The floating blue orb was there too, although it wasn't doing anything to help.

"What's he doing?" Gina asked, watching him progress through whatever structure he was in.

"He's being used, mostly." the AI said, sounding annoyed. "He's in

what's called the Library. There's an artifact, called the Index, that that orb wants him to get to activate the ring." A holographic picture of the artifact popped up next to the frame.

"And this is all a bad thing?" Gina asked, continuing to watch the frame.

"Of course." Cortana replied, as though it was easy enough to figure out. "Once this ring is activated, it will cause destruction on a galactic scale. Every sentient life form would be, lets say, history." Gina nodded, comprehending the information.

"So why haven't you gotten the Chief to stop?" she finally asked. Cortana sighed.

"I can't reach him over the COM channels. All we can do is sit and watch him." the AI replied. "Of course, the ring won't be activated without the Index. I plan to take it when the Master Chief puts it into the system."

"Right." Gina said. "Now tell me more about the ring and the parasite." Cortana dismissed the image of the Index and pulled up a stream of information. Rather than reading it all, Gina just listened to the summary from Cortana.

"The parasite you refer to is called the Flood. From what I understand, it's an accident the Forerunners made. They created Halo, and many others I suspect, to control the Flood. They contained them here on the rings, and whenever there was an outbreak, they would activate Halo and destroy all food source for the Flood, causing them to die out." Cortana explained. "The main threat with the Flood is the spores. They take control of their host and morph it into the creatures you've seen."

"What's the difference in all the forms?" Gina asked, turning again to the frame.

"Ah, yes." Cortana froze the frame and highlighted two different forms. "This larger one is what used to be an Elite, which is why it's much bigger than this one," she pointed out the second Flood form, "Which was what used to be a human." The frame continued until MC came face to face with waddling form with short legs and arms and enormous bulb protruding from its back and head. The AI froze the frame again. "This carrier, I believe, used to be a Grunt by the way it waddles when it walks. Of course, it doesn't look like a Grunt because of its enormous bulb." The frame then continued to play and the form dropped to the ground and its bulb exploded. At least ten tiny spores scurried out of the dead form.

"Gruesome." Gina commented. "How long until MC gets the Index? And how long will it take for him to get back here?" Cortana dismissed all the information and calculated an answer.

"At the rate he's progressing, it'll take another hour and a half to get to the Index. As far as getting back here, that orb is called 343 Guilty Spark and it's the monitor of all of Halo." Cortana began.

"All of Halo? Wouldn't it be kinda hard to get around?" Gina interrupted. Cortana nodded.

"_Yes_. I'm getting to that."

"Sorry."

"Now." Cortana paused for a short second. "The Monitor uses a power grid that runs all throughout Halo to transport himself wherever he wants to go."

"Gotcha. Can you do that?" Gina asked, turning her attention back to the frame. MC was riding a lift to another floor and the Guilty Spark was floating nearby.

"I'm hacking the system now." the AI replied. There was a long moment of silence. "I'm detecting a Covenant dropship inbound to the valley. Seems you've attracted visitors."

"Joy. I'll be back later."

An hour later, Gina walked back into the Control Room, reloading a Needler she had picked up. Cortana turned her head to glance at her before turning back to the multiple things she had pulled up.

"How'd he doing?" she asked, walking up.

"Fine. He's almost to the Index." Cortana replied. "And I suppose you've taken care of everything outside?"

"Not completely." Gina admitted. "A bugged out after the tenth dropship." Cortana nodded absentmindedly.

"Good thing too. I suspect the Monitor won't take it lightly when I take his Index. He'll pose an uncomfortable threat until we get off this ring."

"Speaking of getting off, what are we doing after we take the Index." Gina asked, glancing at the frame. MC was taking the Index. She turned to Cortana.

"I'm still working out a few bugs in that plan. We're defiantly destroying the ring, how I'm not sure of quite yet. We have a number of possibilities. But whatever we do, we have to save Captain Keyes before we do it." the AI replied. "I'd rather not let the Monitor know I'm in the system, so I'm shutting off my image. We'll make our plan of action later." Cortana's image shrunk and disappeared from view, as did all the other things she had on the holo screen.

Gina checked her shotgun and Needler again out of habit and looked up just in time to see a flash of yellow and the Chief and Monitor appear out of nowhere. The Monitor was chattering about something, but MC didn't look like he was listening as he silently made his way down to the control panel.

"Where'd you come from?" MC asked. Gina smirked.

"I could ask you the same question, sir." she replied. The Monitor hummed and floated between them.

"Could we please stay on task! This installation must be activated if we want to stop this outbreak!" Its light pulsed.

"Where?" the Chief asked, holding up the Index.

"There, please." The Monitor replied, floating over to the slot in the holo panel. The Chief hesitantly pushed the Index inside. There was a loud hum and Gina held her breath. Suddenly, the humming stopped and the Index stopped glowing its ghostly green. The Monitor stopped humming.

"That wasn't supposed to happen." it mused. Cortana quickly magnified and Gina breathed a sigh of relief.

"Oh really?" she demanded.

"What? What are you doing in there?" the Monitor reeled back. Cortana smirked.

"Stopping you, what's it look like?"

"What's going on here?" the Master Chief held up both hands. "Let's calm down and explain ourselves."

"He doesn't need to explain anything, Chief. I already know what he's been trying to do. Halo is not a weapon."

"What? Slow down."

"She's right, Chief." Gina stepped in. "If Cortana had let the Index activate the ring, we would not be standing her right now." The Spartan looked from Gina to Cortana to the Monitor.

"Is this true?"

"Yes." the Monitor replied simply. "Of course, I could not tell you this because there is the slight probability that you would not be willing to comply once you knew." The Monitor hummed. "O well. I can always find another."

"How can you when I've got the Index?" Cortana challenged, waving the icon at him.

"What? You're? You wouldn't dare!" the Monitor stuttered.

"She's already done it." Gina replied, leveling her gun. The Monitor quickly composed itself.

"If you will not comply, no matter. The ring will be activated." Sentinels began appearing all around them.

"Get. Us. Out. Of. Here." Cortana hissed. MC quickly jammed her chip inside his helmet and leveled his gun as well. The Monitor addressed his Sentinels, then left in another flash of yellow light.

Immediately, the Sentinels opened up. The two humans didn't waste any time either. Most of the Sentinels had hardly any time to hit them before they were blown out of the air. Gina smacked one's wing when it got too close, making it spin off and hit another. The Chief used

his shotgun to his advantage, taking most of the floating targets out with one hit. The rest were mopped up with Gina's Needler fire.

"What's the master plan, Cortana?" Gina asked, quickly reloading.

"The Monitor may be able to activate the ring without the Index. In that case, Chief, you'll have to take out some power generators the Monitor will need to fire Halo." Cortana replied.

"And what about Gina?" the Chief asked, opening the doors. Sentinels were engaging Elites. The two ducked and fired at both enemies.

"I've found Captain Keyes, but it'll take awhile to get there. I can't transport both Gina and you in the grid, so she'll have to meet us there." the AI replied. Gina fired at an Elite, bringing it down.

"Okay." she replied. "Where is he and how do I get there?"

"I'm uploading a NAV point to your eye-piece. There's two Banshees in the valley currently. You can commandeer one and get there that way." A little green arrow appeared on the eyepiece in Gina's helmet.

"Meet you there, then." she said and made her way down the temple-like structure. MC followed at a distance, but the two were soon separated as they went to their different objectives.

I hope the last two chapters have made up for the wait. I'll try and get another one up as soon as possible. R&R!

7. The Captain

**hmmpmâ€| no reviews for the last two chapters.**

**yet.**

**I suppose it's my own fault for not updating in so longâ€|that's all going to be fixed soon, don't worry. :)**_

Gina pulled the screaming Banshee around for another pass, fuel rod cannons charging. The other Banshee fired its secondary weapons at her and the marine had to pull the Banshee into a back flip to avoid most of the fire. The cannon was fully charged at that point and Gina wasted no time firing. The other Banshee crashed onto the surface of Halo.

It took only a second for the marine to reorient herself with her direction and pulled the Banshee around, the arrow in her eyepiece steadily growing larger. After an hour of flying, the small cockpit was becoming cramped and the light was quickly fading. Canyons and gullies dotted the landscape the small craft flew over and in the distance, she could see the Covenant cruiser she was headed for. She checked the meters until arrival on her eyepiece. She figured only a half-hour and she'd be there.

* * *

>"Good." Cortana's voice was calm and controlled. "Only one more pulse generator left. It's in the adjacent canyon." <p>"Easy enough." the Master Chief replied, feeding ammo into the shotgun he carried.<p>

"You'll have to go through that tunnel to get there." the AI told him as he stepped outside. "You'll have to find another Banshee in the other canyon to get to the pulse generator." The Spartan put the Banshee into a steep dive and entered the tunnel, trying to fly low. A rocket shot off, missing him by a meter and the Chief quickly bailed. He might not be so lucky the next time. His armor took the crunch of the slight fall and he rushed forward, blasted the Flood forms that tried to rush him. The form that had been carrying the rocket launcher wasn't hard to find. It was shooting off wild shots, missing him horribly. A good shell to the chest was enough to pop the infection form on the inside of the mutilated body and the warrior fell. Chief checked the ammo on the rocket launcher. It still had a good three rockets in it, much more effective than his nearly spent assault rifle. He exchanged the weapons and continued on.

It didn't take long for the Chief to get out and find a Banshee. Commandeering it had been a challenge, but the Chief had gotten it in the end, and that was all that mattered to him.

"Sentinels." Cortana informed him calmly. The Spartan could tell that she was getting anxious to find the Captain. The Banshee was able to take out most of them, and the Chief mopped up the rest with his shotgun.

"How's Gina's progress?" he inquired, slipping into the hallway. Satisfied that no one was in the next chamber, he walked in. The pulse generator glowed from around the corner.

"She's been out of my sensors for a while. But the Covenant Battle Net, despite its complete disarray, has mentioned an unidentified Banshee heading for their downed cruiser." the AI replied. The Spartan stood before the bluish-white light of the generator.

"Do you still have a lock on the Captain's signal?" he inquired. It took a moment before the AI replied.

"Yes and no. I've got a lock on his general location, but there's interference; like there's another human Neural Transponder in his area. I believe the Flood might be the cause of the interference." The soldier took note of this and stepped into the beam. His shields flared and there was a good explosion. He quickly pulled himself out of the beam and his shields slowly recharged.

"Now lets go get Keyes." MC said. "Give me a NAV point."

"No, that'll take too long." Cortana said. "We need to get there now, if we want the codes to destroy the _Autumn_. I'll draw power to make the jump to the cruiser from your suit without damaging it. Hold on." The soldier didn't have a chance to reply before the feeling of nausea returned and the bands of yellow light took him away.

* * *

>Landing in the hangar bay was anything but a walk in the park. Gina wrestled with the controls and tried to bring the craft down easy. The Flood in the hanger, however, seemed determined to stop that from happening. She unceremoniously crashed into the deck and quickly jumped out of the wreckage. She quickly grabbed her shotgun from the cockpit and opened fire on the Flood who used to be an Elite. The monstrosity collapsed, only to be stepped over by more of its kind. Keeping her back against a wall, the marine held her own until the hangar was finally silent. She keyed the COM. <p>"This is Private Gina. Any UNSC personnel, respond." she said. There was a crackle of static.<p>

"_Getâ€| get out._" Someone's voice replied slowly. The connection was filled with static. "_You shouldn't be here, Private._" Gina realized that it was Captain Keyes.

"Captain, sir! Where are you? The Chief will be here soon." she said. There was more static.

"_Leaveâ€| me. Getâ€| out._" The connection blurred static and then was cut.

"Captain!" Gina tried to re-contact him, but all she got was static. Cursing, she reloaded her weapon and glanced around the hangar. Most of the doors were either locked or not operational, and the only one on Gina's level led to the bridge. Not having anywhere else to go until the Chief and Cortana arrived, Gina proceeded to the bridge or brig- which ever she got to first.

Not but ten minutes later, MC reappeared in the covenant cruiser. At first, he thought something was horribly wrong, until gravity took hold and he flipped end over end onto the deck.

"Oh, I see." Cortana murmured. "The-" The Spartan hit his helmet meaningfully and the AI stopped. "Right. Sorry."

"Where are we?" MC inquired, heading down the purple corridor.

"This is a covenant cruiser,"

"Obviously." Cortana ignored the interruption.

"Which couldn't take off due to engine troubles. After the Flood was released, the Covenant tried to repair it so the Flood wouldn't escape the ring." MC peeked around the corner and saw a group of spores. A short blast from the assault rifle took care of them. Assured the hall was cleared, for the moment, he continued on. "But the Flood got here," Cortana continued. "And the Covenant are in a frenzy to purge the ship of the Flood and get it away from Halo."

"Interesting." the Chief replied, filing the info away. His main concern was getting the Captain out of there, not the Covenant's problems. "Can you find the Captain? And is Gina here yet?"

"I'm still getting interference about the Captain's NIT, but we can try the COM to contact Gina." Cortana replied. Flood began to pour out of the corridor ahead of them.

"You do that then. I'm a little busy." MC told her, taking out the

scurrying spores with his assault rifle. He tossed a frag grenade into the group and took out the survivors with a sustained blast from his assault rifle. He was done by the time Cortana had keyed the COM.

"This is Cortana calling Gina, come in." There was a short burst of static.

"_I was wondering when you would get here._" a familiar voice replied. "_I've run into a lot of Flood. I think I'm surrounded._"

"I've traced your location." Cortana replied. "Hold tight, we're on our way."

"_Good deal._" There was a burst of automatic weapons fire before the connection was cut.

"She's near to the brig. I'll direct you through to the quickest way to her." the AI told the Spartan, who was continuing on down the corridor.

After falling through a hold in the ship, the Chief had to make his way along the ground to the grav lift. They were contacted by Gina a few times, who promptly updated them on her situation.

"_I'm near the grav room now if you want me to wait for you. The Flood seem to have slowed down in this area._" she was telling them. MC was busy and let Cortana do the talking.

"Go ahead and hold position. We're near the gravity lift now. You're no longer surrounded?"

"_Nope._" the marine replied. "_I took care of them; although, they keep popping up. A little help would be greatly appreciated._"

"Same here." the Chief replied before Cortana could. "Chief out."

"_Gina out. Meet you up top._" Guns blazing, the Spartan made his way up a ridge. He had never seen the Covenant fight so hard. He almost regretted shooting them down after they had killed most of the Flood. Almost.

Gina had her shotgun raised and was scanning the room when the Master Chief appeared. She saluted smartly.

"Glad to see you, Chief." she told him. "I think I know where the Captain is."

"Where? Cortana's having trouble pinning his location down." the Chief told her. Gina seemed surprised at that statement.

"Really now? Any ways, I've already been to the brig. I think he's in or near the bridge." MC nodded and loaded his weapon.

"What's your status?"

"Minor elbow injury, half loaded shot gun, and my pistol's about spent too. I have no more grenades." MC glanced at her left elbow and

saw the armor plating torn away. The rest of the marine armor was scored with plasma and dented in a few places.

"Sounds like you've been in a heck of a fight." Cortana announced over the Chief's external speakers. Gina grinned and nodded.

"Took care of them as best I know how."

"I suggest we move on." the Spartan said just as the clacking of spores stared again. "Gina, you take point. I got our rear."

"Yes sir." she replied. The two worked their way through the twisted ship. A couple of times, Cortana tried to direct them down one corridor but discovered that Gina's directions were both faster and less Flood filled.

"I bet you hate being wrong." the Chief quietly told Cortana. The AI made the equivalent of a sigh.

"I've got to hand it to her, she knows her stuff." The AI then added, "But she was trained by them you know."

"That just means she's got a better handle on the terrain. She's still on our side." MC replied hotly. Gina, unaware of their conversation opened the next door.

"I didn't say I doubted her."

"Yeah, but you were thinking it."

"More like processing the odds of her being a spy."

"I'd rather you stuck to the mission at hand." the Chief snapped. Cortana sensed his anger and then replied over the external speakers,

"The Captain's signal is strong. He must be nearby." A group of Flood warriors lunged at them from around the corner. Gina backed up and shot. MC threw a grenade into the pack, yelling, "Fire in the hole!" After being responded by a successful bang, there were no more enemy targets. The three continued on in silence. Gina leaned against a wall and started punching codes into the door panel. The door hummed, but didn't open. Gina kicked the wall and began punching more characters in. The doors slid apart.

The bridge was creepishly silent compared to the other parts of the Flood infested ship. It was, if possible, even darker too. The two soldiers kept their weapons raised and proceeded inside. Gina crouched and inched forward slowly.

"There's something on the command platform." she hissed urgently. The Master Chief crept forward, Gina covering his six, although she kept glancing at the _thing_ they were headed towards.

"The Captain's life readings just flat-lined." Cortana announced as they came to stand before the Flood form. It didn't move. It didn't even look like it was alive. But the face of Captain Jacob Keyes was in it and Gina felt like puking.

"What did they do to him?" the Chief asked.

"Iâ€| I don't know." Cortana replied soberly. "The Flood must haveâ€| tried to use him for information. But he resisted." Gina swallowed the rock in her throat and turned to the Chief.

"I'mâ€| ready to finish this when you are, sir." she said, her voice calm. Even in the dim, the Chief could see her pale face. The Spartan turned to the _thing_ that used to be his Captain and plunged his hand into it. Gina turned away, pretending to keep watch while she was really resisting the urge to spill what little rations she had eaten in the past hours.

"I have the codes." Cortana announced. "We should leave."

"I thought you'd never ask." Gina murmured. The two quickly made their way back to the hangar bay.

and thus ends another chapter. I don't have school tomorrow, so I might begin the next chapter, where they finally get off halo and I can begin the more original stuffâ€| I probably won't finish it tomorrow though, so you can expect it next week or the week after. :) hey, at least it's not five or six months after. Xx

8. The Maw and Halsey

okay. STILL no reviews. this is getting sad. o well, I like this story too much to stop and wait for reviews to come in. the more original part of this fic will be hinted at in this chapter and the chapters to come. ;) just bear with me.

The two Banshees stayed in a loose formation as they headed towards the crashed _Pillar of Autumn_. There wasn't much talk between them the whole trip. The shock of seeing their mutated Captain was enough to keep them silent most of the trip.

"_Gina, what's you Banshee's status?_" Cortana asked over the COM. The marine quickly checked all the controls.

"Fine. No engine problems, just getting low on fuel." she replied. She tried to stretch in the cramped space but felt just as sore as before.

"_We've got a little engine trouble and low fuel too._" MC replied.
"_It's not that far to the Autumn; we should make it._"

"Yes, sir." Gina replied. "Private out."

"_Master Chief out._" The COM hissed static before their connection was cut again. The rest of the trip was made in silence.

The wide stretch of land to the _Autumn_ was rocky and filled with little canyons and caves. They knew they were getting close when they saw the wide and long trail the ship had left when it crash-landed.
At least it didn't blow up on contact. Gina thought to herself.

"_We've got some engine problems. We're not going to make it!_" Cortana exclaimed through the COM. "_Pull up, Chief, pull up!_"

"_We're fine._" Gina heard the Spartan reply the AI. "_Lets try the life pods._" His Banshee whined and began to loose power. Just as the engines short circuited, the Master Chief jumped out of the craft and grabbed the ledge of the life-boat jettison ramp.

"You two alright?" Gina asked. She got a thumbs up from the Chief. "Alright, I'm gonna come in for another pass and jump out." She pulled the Banshee around and slid in close to the wall. Just as she came up to the pod where the Chief was, she killed the engines and jumped. The Chief caught her hand and helped her inside. Cortana humped.

"Show off's."

With a grin, Gina followed MC into the ship. She'd never been on a human ship before, and despite it's definite need for repair, the ship amazed her.

"We're going to need to make our way to the bridge. There, I can start a count down to destroy the ship and Halo." Cortana said as the two rounded a corner into an empty corridor.

"Do you think there are Flood here?" Gina asked. She didn't hear any clacking, but with the Flood, you never knew.

"It's possible," Cortana replied. "But don't get your hopes up." Just as she finished her sentence, three Sentinels swooped out of nowhere and tried to fry them with their lasers. Dodging the robot's fire, the two soldiers brought them down in a quick firefight. They reloaded their weapons and continued on.

"Since the Sentinels are here, the Flood must be too." MC said as they encountered more of the floating robots. "Either that or the Monitor." The last Sentinel dropped like a rock and exploded on the deck.

"Neither are so good." Gina replied sourly, tossing her spent shotgun away. She grabbed up a dead Elite's plasma rifle and followed the Chief into a service corridor. A small group of spores jumped out of the ladder down to another deck in front of MC. A short burst from his assault rifle popped them all, but they both could hear more down at the bottom of the ladder. The grenade bounced a little before exploding, but the sound of the Flood quickly stopped. The two climbed down the ladder and continued on.

The Flood had found the ship and causing havoc for the Covenant who held the Pillar of Autumn. Trying to steer clear of both groups of hostiles, Cortana guided them throughout the ship. There was a small group of Grunts and an Elite in the bridge, but they were quickly brought down and MC was soon sliding Cortana's chip into a data processor. Her hologram appeared in the pedestal.

"You leave home for a few days, and look what happens." she muttered. "Give me a secondâ€œ Okay, there." A red countdown appeared on the broken screen. "That should give us enough time to get to a life boat and put some distance between us and Halo before it detonates."

"What about the-" Gina hadn't finished her sentence before that

sing-songy voice came over the COM.

"I'm afraid that's out of the question."

"Oh, hell." Cortana muttered. MC turned to Gina.

"You had to open your mouth." Gina shrugged.

"It's what I do best." she turned back to Cortana. "What's he doing?"

"This record!" the Monitor was saying, although neither of the humans were paying the Monitor any mind. "I am shocked." The connection was cut and Cortana smiled sadly.

"At least I still have the COM channels. But he's stopped the countdown. He may take the reactors off line, so then we couldn't make the ship go under self-destruct." She sighed. "If he does that, I don't know what to do."

"What if we just blow it up manually?" Gina asked. MC nodded.

"How much firepower would we need to crack an engine shield?" he asked. Cortana shrugged.

"A rocket maybe, or a well placed grenade would do fine." the AI replied. The Chief tossed a grenade up and caught it again. Gina was tossing another back and forth in her hands. "Okay, lets get moving." The light on the pedestal turned green as Cortana's image dissolved. Chief yanked the chip and slammed it into the back of his helmet. Once she was inside his head, she exclaimed, "Sentinels!" Gina ducked behind the control console faster than the Chief did. His shields took a hit, but quickly recharged as he ducked out of the robots fire.

"I got right, you take left." he barked. Gina saluted with her plasma rifle and rolled to the left, taking a knee and letting loose a barrage of plasma. One Sentinel fell out of the sky just as her rifle over loaded. She set it on the ground and drew her sidearm in one quick movement and proceeded to blast the second one. The Chief opened fire with his assault rifle, taking one down in a quick and steady fire. The second sentinel on the right side of the bridge fired its laser, but missed and shot the deck over the Chief's shoulder. Ozone was thick in the air when he emptied the rest of his clip into the robot. Reloading, Gina stood and went over to him.

"You're gonna have to lead the way, Chief." she said. "Ready to go." MC nodded.

"Good. Lets get the hell out of here."

"Couldn't have said it better myself."

The Flood massed in bigger waves then, doing everything in their one minded power to stop them. Continuing to Engineering was a tedious task, full of its own surprises, not all of which pleasant ones. By the time they had finally gotten to the arrow that marked Engineering, both the Spartan and marine were out of frag grenades.

"The armory isn't far away." Cortana announced. "I'm marking NAV points on you HUD and uploading one to your eyepiece, Gina." A little red arrow appeared on her eyepiece and Gina followed the Chief towards it.

The armory was dark, a couple of its overhead lights burnt out, and the marines on the floor were all dead. Most of the weapons and ammo, however, looked untouched.

"Take a shotgun and a rocket-launcher," MC told Gina as he stashed four grenades on his belt. "Just in case." Gina did as she was told, grabbing as many extra rockets as she could carry. She exchanged her well-used sidearm for a new shotgun and fed rounds into it. The Chief, armed with a shotgun and crowd-control assault rifle, waited patiently, gun pointed at the door. Gina quickly grabbed four grenades, then turned to the Chief.

"You hear that too?" she hissed. He nodded silently, quietly advancing to the back of the room. Gina cocked the shotgun and followed. The back door hissed, but no one or _thing_, came through. The sound of gurgling gave the combat form away, though and both the Chief and Gina shot at air. The Flood- once Elite- fell to the deck with two holes in its chest.

"They've found active cammos." Gina muttered. She grabbed a spare shotgun round and shoved it into the weapon for perfect ammo again. The Chief, his weapon still raised, backed away back to the front room.

"Run."

"What?"

"Run. Back to Engineering." He opened fire at the unseen enemy and Gina turned and ran, following the arrows on the floor. She entered the large room, almost intrigued at the sight of the engines, but the urgency of her mission pushed her on. Then she realized: she didn't know what she was supposed to do.

Ignoring this, she tried to figure it out on her own. St least until the Chief caught up. She blasted a combat form away with her shotgun and proceeded up a ramp. She noted the health packs along the way to the next ramp and continued on. She was on the second level when she noticed 343 Guilty Spark. She whacked at it with her shotgun and it staggered in the air.

"You know, that will not injure Me." it told her. Gina shrugged.

"Yeah, but it makes me feel better." She gave it another whack, making it bounce on the ground for a moment, and ran off, to be confronted by more Flood.

"_Gina, where are you?_" the Chief demanded over the COM. She shot a carrier form and then the spores that poured out of the carnage before replying.

"I just got to the third level, although I have no frigid clue what the hell I'm doing." she replied, obviously frustrated. Cortana

jumped in with the instructions.

"_Find a control console and activate it. Then jump down and shoot a rocket into the engine core._" the AI told her.

"Sounds easy enough." she muttered, shooting another combat form down.

"_There are four consoles. I'm on my way up to help._" MC told her. Gina punched a random control on a panel, since she couldn't read Basic, and was relieved when there was a loud beep and a construct began to move. She jumped on a pulled out her rocket launcher. Once she had a clear shot, she pulled the trigger. There was a loud explosion and warning alarms went crazy. Gina was climbing back onto the console platform when Cortana announced,

"_Good work. Step one complete. Go ahead and move on to second panel._" Reassured that she was on the right track, Gina spotted the second panel and rushed to it, hitting the same button as before. Alarms sounded again and Gina jumped on. Her second rocket exploded and the emergency alarms screamed louder. When she climbed back onto the console platform, she was met by MC. He blasted a hole in a combat form and reloaded his weapon.

"Let's go get the second two." he told her. Gina nodded and followed, covering their rear. Flood were now rushing in from everywhere. The Chief punched a button and jumped on while Gina defended his position, shooting a pack of Sentinels with one of her rockets. The whole group exploded and landed in flaming shards on the first deck.

"Go hit the next button!" the Chief called to her and Gina quickly obeyed. She practically punched the console before jumping on, rocket launcher trained and ready. There was one last explosion and the ship rocked, making Gina drop the nearly spent launcher. Ignoring that, she climbed back up to meet the Chief. He waved her forward and the two dashed through the ship, which was quickly falling apart.

After following some twisting corridors, the two halted next to a lift. For the first time in a long while, Gina relaxed. There were no hostiles around to bother them and they were getting off the ring. When the lift screeched to a halt, hard realization hit her in the form of Shade plasma fire.

Groaning with the new pain, Gina dropped and rolled away. MC primed and tossed a grenade, quickly moving out of the turret's line of fire as well. Pulling herself to one knee, Gina took out the Grunts that the grenade had failed to kill.

"You okay?" MC asked, helping her onto the lift. The marine grunted and nodded.

"For now." she replied with a small smile. She reloaded her shotgun and tired to ignore the pain of the plasma burns. The Chief nodded absentmindedly and leveled his gun as the lift continued up. Cortana keyed the COM.

"This is Cortana, contacting Foehammer. We are ready for immediate extraction." There was a wave of static and the pilot replied.

"_I read you, Cortana. I'm making my way to your position now._"
There was a short pause. "_Is every thing okay in there? Things are getting noisy._"

"Negative Foehammer. The _Pillar of Autumn _is going to blow. We need extraction now."

"_I read you, I read you._" Foehammer replied. "_Meet you at the extraction point._" The COM went dead.

"How far is it to this extraction point?" Gina asked as the lift screeched to a halt. She followed the Chief into a bay of Warthogs.

"Not far if we drive." the Spartan replied. "You drive. I've got the gun." Gina nodded and eased herself into the seat. She revved the engines and drove the 'Hog out of the bay. An explosion rocked the area just as they exited and Gina had to fight the controls to keep the vehicle from flipping.

Their escape route was full of obstacles. Gina was constantly pulling at the controls to stop the 'Hog from crashing, although she did find joy in running Flood combat forms over at top speed. The Master Chief was constantly shooting as the targets swarmed around them. Gina had to slam the breaks hard when Cortana announced that they had reached the extraction point. Gina exhaled slowly and climbed out, standing next to the Spartan, gazing out at the orange horizon.

"She not going to make it." he hissed as the smoking pelican came soaring towards them. Two banshees followed it, their guns charged and shooting.

"_I'm going down!_" the pilot yelled. Static ruled the COM as the Pelican soared over their heads. Gina jumped back into the driver's seat.

"We're not going to make it either if we don't get out of here." she told them. MC jumped in the gunner's again and Cortana tried to contact Foehammer. At last she announced,

"She's gone." There was a short pause. "Calculating next best escape option."

Gina didn't wait for that option before slamming her foot into the accelerator as hard as she could. She hadn't known the pilot for long. But she sure as hell knew her better than she knew any of the other marines. Gina realized she would miss her cheery attitude over the COM.

"There's a long sword still parked in the hangar. We need to get there now if we expect to get off this thing." Cortana announced. Gina tried to press the accelerator harder.

So it was once again a race against time. A countdown in Gina's eyepiece counted down the seconds, all too fast for her liking. She swerved fast and never lightened up on the accelerator. After clearing a wide jump, she figured they were home free to the hangar. A few minutes later, she spotted the barrels.

The 'Hog was going too fast for Gina to slow it down enough. All she

had time to do was yell "Jump!" before the run-away vehicle crashed into the fuel barrels. The already flaming barrels rocked with the impact and explosion, rocketing Gina out of her seat. MC had jumped out.

MC quickly searched the wreckage, finding the marine lying on her back on the hood of the car. She groaned when she saw him. Blood ran down out of her mouth and her other injuries were obviously serious. Her helmet had fallen off, leaving her shoulder-length blonde hair to be soaked in her blood.

"Chiefâ€| she groaned. "Get out of here. While you still have time." The Spartan sat her up and looked her in the eye, although she couldn't tell through his visor.

"Private Gina Halsey you will accompany me off this ring."

The name rung in Gina's ears before she blacked out.

The Master Chief swung the unconscious soldier over his shoulder and took a mad dash for the Longsword. Flood, Covenant. They didn't matter at that moment to him. All he was concerned about was getting away from the ship and the ring.

He set Gina in the co-pilots seat and jumped into the pilot's chair. He shoved Cortana's chip into a data processor and simply said, "Punch it." The Longsword closed up and the engines booted up. The small craft quickly pulled away and out of the ring's atmosphere. Seconds later, Halo began to explode to pieces.

There was a long silence after the Chief shut down the engines. Cortana's image popped up in a display.

"Now." She folded her arms across her chest and nodded towards Gina. "What about her?"

_muahahahahaâ€| I leave you here, hanging from a cliff to wonder what in the world I'm doingâ€|:) you shall see, you shall see. you just gotta wait awhile. . _

9. Ginaesseve

**_yeah, so I'm still continuing this hoping that I'll get a mass wave of reviews at some point. even a flame would be nice... but while I'm waiting for that wave, I do have TWO reviews.
yay!_**

Adeptis: thank you thank you thank you thank you! yeah, I've been saving that. :) after I began redoing this fic, I thought, hey that's be cool. so yeah. little twist there. :P_

Cyeshinni: ooh yay! I feel honored now!

**DISCLAIMER: halo and halo2 are not mine and I'll accept that as long as I can play them**

The AI Cortana was frustrated. Something was wrong with the ship's close-range scanners, the Longsword had no Slip-Space engines, and John had known something Cortana didn't. And all she could do about

it was lay dead in space and demand answers from the Spartan.

"So what are we going to do about her?" Cortana asked again. The Chief was carefully removing her battle armor to reveal her UNSC fatigues. He was carefully treating her wounds when he finally answered.

"What do you mean? And can you give me a bio-sign reading on her?" He injected biofoam into a wound on her forearm and turned to glance at Cortana. The AI sighed.

"I can't. I'm having trouble scanning anything in or near the ship. If I knew what it was, I could scan properly, butâ€œ!" She paused, processing the information. "I think it's both a Human and Covenant signal." There was a long silence. "Chief, I think it'd be best if you moved her to a bunk instead of the floor." the AI said. The Chief scooped the still unconscious woman off the floor and headed off of the small ship's bridge.

"Oh, so you do care." he muttered and walked off. Cortana sighed again and continued to scan. The interference was strongest within the ship. The AI calculated the possibilities of what it could be. The Flood was an option, but John had already scoured the ship to make sure they had no stow-away's. She tried to scan again, without success. She pushed the scanner problems aside and concentrated on what they were going to do about Gina.

"So how do you know she's Doctor Halsey's daughter?" Cortana asked once MC had reentered the bridge. John sat down in the pilot's seat and checked the ship's status. Cortana turned off the displays.
"Chief."

"There's no escaping you, is there?" he mused and stood, beginning to pace. There was a short silence. "I knew her before the Spartan II Project began. When I lived on Eridanus 2."

"How can you be sure that this is the same girl?" Cortana asked.
"Eridanus was destroyed years ago." Cortana calculated a few possibilities. "Other than her eyes, I see no like-ness of Doctor Catherine Halsey."

"But you do agree that Dr. Halsey had a daughter named Gina, don't you?" John inquired, glancing at her before he continued pacing.

"Yes. Dr. Halsey told me about her once. She told me she died when Eridanus 2 was destroyed."

"By the Covenant?" the Spartan inquired. Cortana shook her head.

"That's not possible. Eridanus 2 was said to have been destroyed by a natural force. The whole Eridanus system was not heard from for months. There were no witnesses to the destruction and no evidence in the area. The whole problem was dismissed by the military at that point, because we did not know about the Covenant." the AI explained.

"So the Covenant are a possible explanation." the Spartan pointed out. Cortana paused and considered this.

"Possible, but not probable. The Covenant would have by-passed many other Outer-Colonies to get there, then gone back out of system and have been inactive against the Humans for many years." she replied. "And taking a prisoner with them would be even more unlikely."

"Yet Gina is still alive and here." the Chief pointed out. "The only explanation we have at the moment is that the Covenant did take her prisoner." Neither the AI nor Spartan said anything for a long while.

"I guess we can't know until we can get answers from her." Cortana muttered. "I'm going to try and pin down the problem with the scanners."

"You do that." MC replied and left the bridge again. Cortana began to try the scanner. She blocked out everything on the outside of the ship and concentrated on the inside. Now that she had blocked most everything out, the scanner was working better. She could see MC heading towards the weapons lockers, but the interference stopped Cortana from detecting Gina in the bunks. That's when she realized. Gina was the interference.

* * *

>She didn't know where she was. She didn't know what she was doing. She felt extremely lost in the small room she now occupied. She sat on the small bed and tried to think and be calm.

Who am I? She asked herself. Gina. She knew she had another name, but it escaped her memory. The frightened child pulled the blanket up to her chin. It was a strange material she didn't recognize, but it was comforting._

What am I doing?_ She asked herself. She didn't know the answer. Her mind was a big black void, empty. She didn't remember anything but her name and a few short phrases._

Always fight for the good of humanity.

If you're scared, fight. If you can't do it yourself, wait for help.

She tried to remember the deeper meaning behind the words and who spoke them to her, but she didn't recall either. But she did know she was scared. She hung onto her name and the words like a lifeline._

Suddenly, a creature walked through the door. The thing looked completely alien to her. Its face was bird-like and its gun was pointed at her._

Fight back.

She jumped up, frightened.

Fight back.

More creatures came through the door. She didn't know what to do. She couldn't fight them herself. She didn't know how to fight._

She would wait.

* * *

><p><p>

Gina awoke with a start, breathing heavy. She sat up and instinctively reached for her side arm. Pain shot through her wrist and she grimaced. Glancing around, she saw no one was there. It took a moment for her to remember what she had last been doing. Rubbing her head, she climbed out of the bunk and made her way to the bridge.

MC was sitting in the pilot's seat, staring at the display and Cortana was nearby. Both looked up when she came in. Feeling uncomfortable by their stares, she backed up.

"Is something wrong, Chief?" she asked. The Spartan turned back to the controls and indicated the co-pilot's seat.

"Take a seat. And call me John." Gina did as she was told, now even more confused. She had the feeling she should remember that name.

"You got that bio-reading yet, Cortana?" John questioned. Characters scrolled down Cortana's body.

"Hold on, I'm processing this information." she replied. "Okay, here are the readings." Information began scrolling across the main screen. "She's got a broken wrist, sprained ankle, a few torn ligaments, and internal bleeding. A few splints and a couple of pills and she'll be okay in a few days."

"That's it?" John was visibly surprised.

"Yes, even though she should be worse. Or dead." the AI replied.

"What are you two talking about?" Gina demanded. "A little crash like that couldn't kill me."

"Did you just describe that as a LITTLE crash?" John asked, turning to her. "You were telling me to leave you when you blacked out. Remember?"

"Yeah." the marine replied. "But that was only because I thought you wouldn't be able to get away if you waited for me to get up." The Spartan stared at her.

"You expected to get up?" he demanded. The girl shrugged.

"I've gotten up from worse."

"It's true Chief." Cortana put in. "You won't believe all this information I'm getting. It's almost as amazing as the Halo's." Gina looked over at Cortana.

"What's amazing?" she questioned. "What do you know?"

"A very good explanation please." the Spartan muttered, becoming impatient. Information began scrolling down the display.

"Your assumption was right, Chief. Gina is Dr. Halsey's daughter and your childhood friend. Gina's got every scrap of information on the Spartan project right here in her head."

"What?" both soldiers demanded.

"What the hell are you talking about? I've never heard of any Spartan project!" Gina snapped.

"Hey now! Calm down! Both of you are getting a little too anxious here!" Cortana yelled. Both humans sat silent. "Now, if we won't have anymore interruptions, I can explain everything." Neither said anything. "Good. Now, from this here, you can see that Dr. Halsey, when told her research on the Spartan project would have to have a fail-safe option, she secretly stored everything in a Neural Implant, similar to the ones in high-ranking Naval Officers. Dr. Halsey implanted it in her daughter, Gina here." The AI paused for effect.

"Number one, I don't remember anything about that, and Number two, do you mind translating that, because I can not read English." Gina said aloud, obviously annoyed by everything that was happening.

"You can't read?" John asked. "You could read better than I could when I last saw you." Gina stared at him with a blank expression.

"Am I supposed to remember this, because I don't." she stated simply. The Chief took off his helmet to reveal his short brown hair and blue eyes.

"You don't remember anything about Eridanus?" he asked. Gina bit her lip. That word sounded familiar too, but she didn't know why she should remember it. After a moment, she shook her head. The Spartan looked dismayed.

"A reason for her memory loss is in her NIT too, but we'll get to that in a minute. I can, although, teach you to read English in a second." Cortana said. Gina raised an eyebrow, then looked over at the display, that was still scrolling English characters. What had been unrecognizable gibberish to her seconds ago was now understandable. Cortana grinned at Gina's obvious surprise.

"What I've done is transferred some of my language index to your NIT." she began to explain. "After I did that, I flooded your memory with that information, making you be able to read."

"You have that kinda access to my brain?" Gina asked sourly.

"That's the limits of it." Cortana replied with a shrug.

"Great. Just great." John interrupted. "Now that we've had our technology lesson for the day, can we get back to the story?"

"Oh yes." Cortana replied. "During the Spartan, Dr. Halsey sent multiple transmissions to Gina's NIT for safekeeping. She thought she was sending it on a secure and unused channel, but the Covenant must

have intercepted the message." She paused and let the information sink in before continuing. "They, of course, only got part of the message and deemed it worthy enough of finding the rest of it. They traced the transmission to its destination and found Gina. They kidnapped her and destroyed Eridanus."

"So that's it?" John demanded. "Why didn't they kill you after they got what they wanted?" He turned to Gina for an answer, but she shrugged.

"I don't remember that part of it either." Cortana put her hands on her hips.

"Now if you two would stop and finish listening I could answer all your questions." she snapped. The two humans sat and didn't say anything. "Now, after the Covenant had reviewed the information, they revised it to fit their own standards and they're material at hand. They effectively recreated the Spartan Program and renamed it Ginaesseve, after they're name for Gina." This time, Cortana didn't pause. She didn't want anymore interruptions. "But the Council deemed the project too risky to try on their own people, so they decided to try it on Gina. After the augmentation, the only side effect was complete memory loss of things before the augmentation. She was trained to fight."

There was a long enduring silence. John got up and began pacing the room. Gina, in someway, felt like she was the odd end in all this. She felt uncomfortable sitting in the co-pilots seat.

"So what you're saying, Cortana, is that my childhood friend has been turned into a piece of Covenant technology and has been trained to fight against the human race?" He was visibly angry as he said this.

"Hey, now!" Gina snapped, jumping from the chair. "Would you stop talking like I wasn't in the room? Yes, I was trained to fight you, but will I? NO!" Both Cortana and John were surprised about the outburst. Why wouldn't she fight them? Did she remember something?

"Cortana is right about not remembering anything about what happened before the augmentation, but I did remember my name and two little phrases." Gina turned her back to the Chief and muttered, "_Always fight for the good of humanity. If you're scared, fight. If you can't do it yourself, wait for help_." John was hit by the words. He remembered those too.

"Your grandfather said that." he mused. "All the time. He was a retired war veteran." Gina shrugged.

"I don't remember. Everything's just a big black hole." She turned back around and faced John. "That was the only thing I knew for awhile, until I got used to living with the Covenant. And I've always lived by that." She looked down at her feet. "I didn't want to tell you much about my life because you trusted me. Now that you knowâ€œ!" She shrugged again. "Guess your going to have to judge me."

John examined her closely. She was his age, but she looked more like a tired and frightened child. How much of life had she missed out on? How much had he missed out on? He realized how similar they really

were, deep down. He touched her shoulder softly and she didn't recoil. She just looked at him with her sad gray eyes. He embraced her.

Somehow, Gina found comfort leaning against the Spartan. After going through life being different, it was nice to have someone that accepted you.

that's a wrap for this chapter! now you knowâ€| kinda! there's more to come about Ginaâ€| or Ginaesseeve. muahahahahaâ€|:P

End
file.